

such convention revised, altered and amended, it would then be *altered* and *amended*, not in the mode prescribed, but in a manner unknown to the constitution. If superseded by a new constitution and form of government, emanating from a convention, it would be *abolished*, not by the General Assembly, the only constitutional legislature; but by a convention, a power not known to the constitution, nor consistent with it. Those who have solemnly promised to support the constitution, cannot disregard its plain provisions.

Your committee do not mean to question the great political apothegms, announced and asserted in the Declaration of Rights. The rights there declared are above the constitution, and not derived from it. The constitution itself, sprang from the exercise of the great power, which is claimed in the first article. It is the social compact, there intended; and in the provisions of that compact, the General Assembly had its origin, and therein will be found the limits to its powers. The question submitted to the committee, concerned the power of the Legislature—not the power of the People. Unquestionably, the legislature can so alter and amend the constitution by two successive enactments, as to make it lawful to call a convention, and to provide, by law, for the election of its members. But as the constitution now stands, this cannot be done, and it only remains for your committee to suggest such alterations in its provisions, as, in their opinion, are proper to be made.

Your committee may be allowed, they hope, without impropriety to remark, that they took up, with great respect, for consideration and revision "The Constitution and form of Government," under which the citizens of Maryland, for two generations, have lived in happiness and peace. Under the broad shield of its protection, the weak found a refuge from oppression, and the stranger an asylum. All were safe in their persons, secure in their property, and protected in their characters. It was the work of patriots, who had put their all in peril for the rights of man. It was framed and adopted at a period, when every tongue was eloquent in favor of liberty, and in condemnation of arbitrary power. It was the compact of the Freemen, and the Delegates of the Freemen of '76; solemnly formed and adopted, as a law for themselves,